

REMARKS

The claims now pending in the application are Claims 16 to 36. Claims 16, 22, 23, 29, 30, and 36 are independent. Claims 1 to 15 previously have been cancelled. Claims 16, 22, 23, 29, 30 and 36 have been amended herein.

In the Official Action dated September 25, 2003, Claims 16, 19, 20, 23, 26, 27, 30, 33, and 34 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e), as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,671,277 (Ikenoue), and Claims 17, 18, 21, 22, 24, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, 35 and 36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as unpatentable over Ikenoue '277 patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,281,998 (Douglas). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections respectfully are requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

The rejections of the claims over the cited art respectfully are traversed. Nevertheless, without conceding the propriety of the rejections, independent Claims 16, 22, 23, 29, 30 and 36 have been amended herein more clearly to recite various novel features of the present invention, with particular attention to the Examiner's comments. Support for the proposed amendments may be found in the original application. For example, with respect to amended Claims 22, and 36, Applicant submits the amended features may be found in the written description at least at page 13, line 23 to page 14, line 2, and page 15, lines 4 to 11. No new matter has been added.

The present invention generally relates to an image processing method and apparatus comprising a printer, a loading unit and a detachable storage medium. In one aspect, as recited in independent Claim 16, the present invention relates to an image processing apparatus comprising a printer that prints an image on a recording sheet based

on an image data file, a loading unit that receives a detachable storage medium, the detachable storage medium having stored therein (i) a plurality of image data files corresponding to images to be printed by the printer and (ii) sheet processing information containing instructions for processing each recording sheet on which the images are printed, wherein the sheet processing information individually specifies respective settings for each of the image data files, and a controller that controls the printer so as to print an image on a recording sheet based on the image data file corresponding to that image stored in the detachable storage medium, and then to process the recording sheet on which the image has been printed in accordance with the sheet processing information stored with the corresponding image data file in the detachable storage medium loaded in said loading unit.

In another aspect, as now recited in independent Claim 22, the present invention relates to an image processing apparatus comprising a printer that prints an image on a recording sheet based on an image data file, a loading unit that receives a detachable storage medium, the detachable storage medium having stored therein a plurality of image data files to be printed by the printer and sheet processing information respectively instructing whether to print each image data file and indicating whether double-sided or single-sided printing is to be performed for each image data file, and a controller that controls the printer so as to print an image of an image data file on a recording sheet based on the instruction set in the image data file in the detachable storage medium loaded in the loading unit, and to print the image on the recording sheet in double-sided or single-sided printing based on the image data stored in the detachable storage medium in accordance

with the sheet processing information stored with the image data in the detachable storage medium loaded in the loading unit.

Independent Claims 23, 29, 30 and 36 variously recite similar features with respect to an image processing method or recording media having recorded thereon code for executing such a method.

Thus, it will be appreciated that, in accordance with the present invention, for each data file of a plurality of data files stored in a detachable recording medium, it is possible to perform corresponding sheet processing of the recording sheets for each image data file *after* printing of the images, by using the sheet processing information recorded with each image data file in the detachable storage medium. Further, it is possible to selectively print only desired image data files of a plurality of image files stored in detachable storage medium based on the prerecorded instructions in each image data file.

Applicant submits that the prior art fails to anticipate the present invention. Moreover, Applicant submits that there are differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art, such that the subject matter taken as a whole would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made.

The Ikenoue "277 patent relates to an image forming apparatus and copy management system for preventing unauthorized copying of documents and for tracking copying of such documents. Each time a hard copy of a controlled document is copied, "additional data" indicating such is embedded in the hard copy and also forwarded to a management unit for tracking. Each time such a hard copy is read, an analysis of the embedded "additional data" is performed. An exemplary system (Fig. 1) includes a floppy

disk reader for reading a floppy disk 104, an image processor 100 and a management unit 200. The image processor 100 is understood to include a controller for controlling processing, including printing. Data entered from the floppy disk 104 enters through an interface 112 to a buffer 113, from which it is analyzed. The data entering the buffer 112 has a predetermined format, as shown in Fig. 19, including image data and "additional data"; the image data includes "format" data, "position" data, character codes and figure codes. However, the "format" data and "position" data are understood to relate only to the character codes and figure codes of the image data for one hard copy page (see, Fig. 32 and corresponding written description at col. 17, lines 38 to 61). Nowhere is the Ikenoue '277 patent understood to disclose or suggest the feature of a detachable storage medium having stored therein image data and *multiple* sheet processing information, such as sorting information, stapling information, and single/duplex printing information, as disclosed and claimed in the present application. That is, Applicants thus submit that the stored "format" and "position" information disclosed in Ikenoue, is patentably distinct from the sheet processing information disclosed and claimed in the present application.

The Douglas '998 patent relates to scheduling color variations for discrete job elements, and discloses a system including a memory for storing electronic images with color mode marks and a control for providing images in optional color modes for producing a set of images processed in a selected color mode independent of the color mode of other elements. The Douglas '998 patent further discloses a system in which job information is prerecorded on, e.g., on a computer tape or disc, and then communicated to the system processor, e.g., to perform a printing job. The job information includes job

parameters specifying the xerographic mode and format for the job. "In other words, this could be parameters identifying . . . whether or not a particular sheet or sheets are to be in a simplex or duplex mode." (See, Fig. 3 and col. 3, lines 40 to 54). However, nowhere is the Douglas '998 patent understood to disclose or suggest the feature of a detachable recording media including image data and sheet processing information, as disclosed and claimed in the present application. Nor is the Douglas '998 patent understood to add anything to the Ikenoue '277 patent that would make obvious the claimed invention.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 16, 22, 23, 29, 30 and 36 are allowable over the cited art whether taken individually or in combination.

Dependent Claims

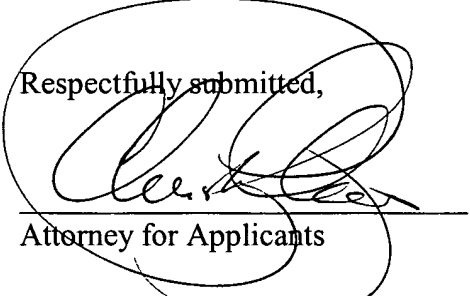
Claims 17 to 21, 24 to 28 and, 31 to 35 depend on Claims 16, 23 and 30, respectively, and are allowable by virtue of their dependency and in their own right for further defining Applicants' invention. Individual consideration of the dependent claims is respectfully requested.

Applicants request that the present Amendment be entered under 37 CFR § 1.116. Applicants submit that the present amendments merely are minor or formal in nature, and reduce the number of issues for consideration. Applicants believe the present Amendment was necessitated by the outstanding Official Action, and submit that the present amendments were not previously made because Applicants believe the prior claims are allowable.

Applicants believe that the present Amendment is responsive to each of the points raised by the Examiner in the Office Action, and submit that the application is in allowable form. Favorable consideration of the claims and passage to issue of the present application at the Examiner's earliest convenience earnestly are solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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